THE WAR IN TEXAS

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Excerpt of An Abolitionist's Explanation of the Cause of the Texas Revolution

It is generally admitted, that the war in Texas has assumed a character which most seriously affects both the interests and the honor of this nation. It implicates the conduct of a large number of our citizens, and even the policy and measures of the government are deeply involved in it. The subject, as now presented to our view, is indeed one of vital importance to the people of the United States; and it particularly invites the attention---the most solemn and deliberate consideration---of all who profess to be guided by the true principles of justice and philanthropy. It is not only to be viewed as a matter of interest, at the present day. The great fundamental principles of universal liberty---the perpetuity of our free republican institutions---the prosperity, the welfare, and the happiness of future generations---are measurably connected with the prospective issue of this fierce and bloody conflict.

But the prime cause, and the real objects of this war, are not distinctly understood by a large portion of the honest, disinterested, and well---meaning citizens of the United States. Their means of obtaining correct information upon the subject have been necessarily limited;---and many of them have been deceived and misled, by the misrepresentations of those concerned in it, and especially by hireling writers for the newspaper press. They have been induced to believe that the inhabitants of Texas were engaged in a legitimate contest for the maintenance of the sacred principles of Liberty, and the natural, inalienable Rights of Man:---whereas, the motives of its instigators, and their chief incentives to action, have been from the commencement, of a directly opposite character and tendency. It is susceptible of the clearest demonstration that the immediate cause and the leading object of this contest originated in a settled design, among the slaveholders of this country, (with land speculators and slave traders) to wrest the large and valuable territory of Texas from the Mexican Republic, in order to re-establish the SYSTEM OF SLAVERY; to open a vast and profitable SLAVEMARKET therein; and, ultimately, to annex it to the United States. And further, it is evident---nay, it is very generally acknowledged---that the insurrectionists are principally citizens of the United States, who have proceeded thither for the purpose of revolutionizing the country; and that they are dependant upon this nation, for both the physical and pecuniary means, to carry the design into effect. We have a still more important view of the subject. The Slaveholding Interest is now paramount in the Executive branch of our national government; and its influence operates, indirectly, ye tpowerfully, through that medium, in favor of this Grand Scheme of Oppression and Tyrannical Usurpation. Whether the national Legislature will join hands with the Executive, and lend its aid to this most unwarrantable, aggressive attempt, will depend on the VOICE OF THE PEOPLE, expressed in their primary assemblies, by their petitions, and through the ballot boxes.

The writer of this has long viewed, with intense anxiety, the clandestine operations of this unhallowed scheme, and frequently warned the public of the danger to be apprehended, in case of its success. He has carefully noted the preparatory arrangements for its consummation---the combination of influence the concentration of physical power---the, organization of various means---and, finally, the undissembled prosecution of it, by overt acts of violence and bloodshed and he now stands pledged to prove, by the exhibition of well attested facts and documentary evidence, that the original cause, the principal object, and the nature of the contest, are what he has, above, represented them to be.

As a preliminary to this exposition, the speech of John Quincy Adams, delivered in the House of Representatives of the United States, December 25th, 1835, is commended to the notice of the reader. Speaking of the constitutional powers of Congress, relative to the subject of slave emancipation, and supposing several cases that may be likely to occur, he proceeds as follows:

I suppose a more portentous case, certainly within the bounds of possibility---I would to God I could say not within the bounds of probability. You have been, if you are not now, at the very point of a war with Mexico ---a war, I am sorry to say, so far as public rumor is credited, stimulated by provocations on our part from the very commencement of this Administration down to the recent authority given to General Gaines to invade the Mexican territory---It is said that one of the earliest acts of this Administration was a proposal made at a time when there was already much ill-humor in Mexico against the United States, that she should cede to the U. States a very large portion of her territory large enough to constitute nine States equal in extent to Kentucky. It must be confessed that a device better calculated to produce jealousy, Suspicion, ill-will, and hatred, could not have been contrived. It is further affirmed that this overture, offensive in itself, was made precisely at the time when a swarm of colonists from these United States were covering the Mexican border with land-jobbing, and with slaves, introduced in defiance of the Mexican laws, by which slavery had been abolished throughout that Republic. The war now raging in Texas is a Mexican civil war, and a war for the re-establishment of slavery where it was abolished. It is not a servile war, but a war between slavery and emancipation, and every possible effort has been made to drive us into the war, on the side of slavery.

It is, indeed, a circumstance eminently fortunate for us that this monster, Santa Anna, has been defeated and taken, *[Mr. Adams, and many others, have been misled by false representations in respect to Santa Anna's character]* though I cannot participate in that exquisite joy with which we have been told that every one having Anglo-Saxon blood in his veins must have been delighted on hearing that this ruffian has been shot, in cold blood, when a prisoner of war, by the Anglo-Saxon leader of the victorious Texian army. Sir, I hope there is no member of the House, of other than Anglo-Saxon origin, who will deem it uncourteous that I, being myself in part Anglo-Saxon, must, of course, hold that for the best blood that ever circulated in human veins. Oh! yes, Sir! far be it from me to depreciate the glories of the Anglo--Saxon race; although there have been times when

they bowed their necks and submitted to the law of conquest, beneath the ascendancy of the Norman race. But, air, it has struck me as no inconsiderable evidence of the spirit which is spurring us into this war of aggression, of conquest, and of slave-making, that all the fires of ancient, hereditary national hatred are to be kindled, to familiarize us with the ferocious spirit of rejoicing at the massacre of prisoners in cold blood. Sir, is there not yet hatred enough between the races which compose your Southern population and the population of Mexico, their next neighbor, but you must go back eight hundred or a thousand years, and to another hemisphere, for the fountains of bitterness between you and them! What is the temper of feeling between the component parts of your own Southern population, between your Anglo-Saxon, Norman French, and Moorish Spanish inhabitants of Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Missouri? between them all and the Indian savage, the the original possessor of the land from which you are I scourging him already back to the foot of the Rocky Mountains! What between them all and the American negro, of African origin, whom they are holding in cruel bondage? Are these elements of harmony, concord, and patriotism between the component parts of a nation starting upon a crusade of conquest? And what are the feelings of all this motley compound equally heterogeneous of the Mexican population! Do not you, an Anglo-Saxon, slave-holding exterminator of Indians, from the bottom of your soul, hate the Mexican-Spaniard-Indian emancipator of slaves and abolisher of slavery! And do you think that your hatred is not with equal cordiality returned? Go to the city of Mexico, ask any one of your fellow citizens who have been there for the last three or four years, whether they scarcely dare show their faces, as Anglo-Americans, in the streets. Be assured, Sir, that, however heartily you detest the Mexican, his bosom burns with an equally deep-seated detestation of you. And this is the nation with which, at the instigation of your Executive Government, you are now rushing into war into a war of conquest; commenced by aggression on your part and for the re-establishment of slavery, where it hr been abolished, throughout the Mexican Republic. For your war will be with Mexico---with a Republic of twenty four States, and a population of eight or nine millions of souls. It seems to be considered that this victory over twelve hundred men, with the capture of their commander, the President of the Mexican Republic, has already achieved the conquest of the whole Republic. That it may have achieved the independence of Texas, is not impossible. But Texas is to the Mexican Republic not more nor so much as the State of Michigan is to yours. That State of Michigan, the People of which are in vain claiming of you the performance of that sacred promise you made them, of admitting her as a State into the Union; that State of Michigan, which has greater grievances and heavier wrongs to allege against you for a declaration of her independence, if she were disposed to declare it, than the People of Texas have for breaking off their union with the Republic of Mexico. Texas is an extreme boundary portion of the Republic of Mexico; a wilderness only inhabited by the Indians until after the Revolution which separated Mexico from Spain; not sufficiently populas at the organization of the Mexican Confederacy to form a State by itself, and therefore united with Coahuila, where the greatest part of the indigenous part of the population reside. Sir, the history of all the emancipated Spanish American colonies has been, ever since their separation from Spain, a history of convulsion and war; of revolutions, accomplished by single and often very insignificant battles; of chieftains, whose title to power has been the murder of their immediate predecessors. They have all partaken of the character of the

first conquest of Mexico by Cortez, and of Peru by Pizaro; and this, Sir, makes me shudder at the thought of connecting our destinies indissolubly with theirs. It may be that a new revolution in Mexico will follow upon this captivity or death of their President and commanding general; we have rumors, indeed, that such a revolution had happened even before his defeat; but I cannot yet see my way clear to the conclusion that either the independence of Texas, or the capture and military execution of Santa Anna, will save you from war with Mexico. Santa Anna was but one of a breed of which Spanish America for the last twenty-five years has been a teeming mother---soldiers of fortune, who, by the sword or the musket ball have risen to supreme power, and by the sword or the musket ball have fallen from it. That breed is not extinct; the very last intelligence from Peru tells of one who has fallen there as Yturbide, and Mina, and Guerrero, and Santa Anna have fallen in in Mexico. The same soil which produced them is yet fertile to produce others. They reproduce themselves, with nothing a change of the name and of the man. Your war, sir, is to be a war of races---the Anglo Saxon American pitted against the Moorish Spanish-Mexican American; a war between the Southern and Northern halves of North America, from Passamaquoddy to Panama. Are you prepared for such a war!

And again I ask, what will be your cause in such a war! Aggression, conquest, and the re-establishment of slavery where it has been abolished. In that war, sir, the banner of freedom will be the banners of Mexico; and your banners, 1 blush to speak the word, will be the banners of slavery. Sir, in considering these United States and the Mexican States as mere masses of power coming to collision against each other, can. not doubt that Mexico will be the greatest sufferer by the shock. The conquest of all Mexico would seem to be no improbable result of the conflict, especially if the war especially I the war should extend no further than the two combatants. But will it be so confined? Mexico is clearly the weakest of the two Powers, but she is not the least prepared for action. She has the more recent experience of war. She has the greatest number of veteran warriors; and although her highest chief has just suffered a fatal and ignominious defeat, yet that has happened often before to leaders of armies too confident of success and contemptuous of their enemy. Even so it is better prepared for a war than you than you are for a war of invasion upon her. There may be found is a successor to Santa Anna, inflamed with the desire, not only for avenging her disaster, but what he and his nation will consider your perfidious hostility. The national spirit may go with him. He may not only turn the table upon the Texian conquerors, but drive them for refuge within your borders, and pursue them into the heart of your own territories. Are you in a condition to resist him? Is the success of your whole army, and all your veteran generals, and all your militia-calls, and all your mutinous volunteers against a miserable band of five or six hundred invisible Seminole Indians, in your late campaign, an earnest of the energy and vigor with which you are ready to carry on that far otherwise formidable and complicated war?---complicated, did I say? And how complicated! Your Seminole war is already spreading to the Creeks, and, in their march of desolation, they sweep along with them your negro slaves, and put arms into their hands to make common cause with them against you, and how far will it spread, Sir, should a Mexican invader, with the torch of liberty in his hand, and the standard of freedom floating over his head, proclaiming emancipation to the slave and revenge to the native Indian, as he goes, invade your soil? What will be the condition of your States of Louisiana, of Mississippi, of Alabama, of Arkansas, of Missouri, and of

Georgia? Where will be your negroes? Where will be that combined and concentrated mass of Indian tribes, whom, by an inconsiderate policy, you have expelled from their widely distant habitations, to embody them within a small compass on the very borders of Mexico, as if on purpose to give that country a nation of natural allies in their hostilities against you! Sir, you have a Mexican, an Indian, and a negro war upon your hands, and you are plunging yourself into it blindfold; you are talking about acknowledging the independence of the Republic of Texas, and you are thirsting to annex Texas, say, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas, and Santa Fe, from the source to the mouth of the Rio Bravo, to your already over-distended dominions. Five hundred thousand square miles of the territory of Mexico would not even now quench your burning thirst for aggrandizement.

But will your foreign war for this be with Mexico alone? No, sir. As the weaker party, Mexico, when the contest shall have once begun, will look abroad, as well as among your negroes and your Indians, for assistance. Neither Great Britain nor France will suffer you to make such a conquest from Mexico; no, nor even to annex the independent State of Texas to your Confederation, without their interposition. You will have an Anglo-Saxon intertwined with a Mexican war to wage. Great Britain may have no serious objection to the independence of Texas, and may be willing enough to take her under her protection, as a carrier both against Mexico and against you. But, as aggrandizement to you she will not readily suffer it; and I above all, she will not suffer you to acquire it by conquest and the re-establishment of slavery. Urged on by the irresistible, overwhelming torrent of public opinion, Great Britain has recently at a cost of one hundred millions of dollars, which her People have joyfully paid, abolished slavery throughout her colonies in the West Indies. After setting such an example, she will not---it is impossible that she should---stand by and witness a war for the re-establishment of slavery where it had been for years abolished, and situated thus in the immediate neighborhood of her islands. She will tell you, that if you must have Texas as a member of your Confederacy, it must be without the trammels of slavery, and if you will wage a war to handcuff and fetter your fellowman, she will wage the war against you to break his chains. Sir, what a figure, in the eyes of mankind, would you make, in deadly conflict with Great Britain---she fighting the battles of emancipation, and you the battles of slavery; she the benefactress, and you the oppressor, of mankind! In such a war, the enthusiasm of emancipation, too, would unite vast numbers, of her People in aid of the national rivalry, and all her natural jealousy against our aggrandizement. No war was ever so popular in England as that war would be against slavery, the slave-trade, and the Anglo-Saxon descendant from her own loins.

As to the annexation of Texas to your Confederation, for what do you want it? Are you not large and unwieldy enough already? Do not two millions of square miles cover surface enough for the insatiate rapacity of your land jobbers? I hope there are none of them within the sound of my voice. Have you not Indians enough to expel from the land of their fathers' sepulchres, and to exterminate! What, in a prudential and military point of view, would be the addition of Texas to your domain? It would be weakness, and not power. Is your southern and southwestern frontier not sufficiently extensive? Not sufficiently feeble? not sufficiently defenseless! Why are you adding regiment after regiment of dragoons to your standing army?

Why are you struggling, by direction and by indirection, to raise per saltum that army from less than six to more than twenty thousand men? Your commanding General, now returning from his excursion to Florida, openly recommends the increase of your Army to that number. Sir, the extension of your sea coast frontier from the Sabine to the Rio Bravo would add to your weakness tenfold; for now it is only weakness with reference to Mexico. It would then be weakness with reference to Great Britain, to France, even perhaps to Russia, to every naval European Power, which might make a quarrel with us for the sake of settling a colony; but above all, to Great Britain. She, by her naval power, and by her American colonies, holds the keys of the gulf of Mexico. What would be the condition of your frontier from the month of the Mississippi to the mouth of the Rio del Norte, in the event of a war with Great Britain! Sir, the reasons of Mr. Monroe for accepting the Sabine as the boundary were three. First, he had no confidence in the strength of our claim as far as the Rio Bravo; secondly, he thought it would make out union so heavy that it would break into fragments by its own weight; thirdly, be thought it would protrude a long line of sea coast, which, in our first war with Great Britain, she might take into her own possession, and which we should he able neither to defend nor recover. At that time there was no question of slavery or of abolition involved in the controversy. The country belonged to Spain; it was a wilderness, and slavery was the established law of the land. There was then no project for carving out nine States, to hod eighteen seats in the other wing of this capitol, in the triangle between the mouths and the sources of the Mississippi and Bravo rivers. But what was our claim? Why it was that La Salle, having discovered the mouth of the Mississippi, and France having made a settlement at New Orleans, France had a right to one-half the sea coast from the mouth of the Mississippi to the next Spanish settlement, which was Vera Cruz. The mouth of the Rio Bravo was about half way from the Balize to Vera Cruz; and so as grantees, from France of Louisiana, we claimed the Rio del Norte, though the Spanish settlement of Santa Fe was at the head of that river. France, from whom we had received Louisiana, utterly disclaimed ever having even raised such a pretension. Still we made the best of the claim that we could, and finally yielded it for the Floridas, and for the line of the 42d degree latitude from the source of the Arkansas river to the South sea. Such was our claim; and you may judge how much confidence Mr. Monroe could have in its validity. The great object and desire of the country then was to obtain the Floridas. It was Gen. Jackson's desire; and in that conference with me to which I have heretofore alluded, and which it is said he does not recollect, he said to me that so long as the Florida rivers were not in our possession, there could be no safety for any whole Southern country.

But, sir suppose you should annex Texas to these United States; another year would not pass before you would have to engage in a war for the conquest of the Island of Cuba. What is now the condition of the Island? Still under the nominal protection of Spain. And what is the condition of Spain herself. Consuming her own vitals in a civil war for the succession of the crown. Do you expect, that whatever may be the issue of that war, she can retain even the nominal possession of Cuba after having lost all her continental colonies in North and South America, Cuba will stand in need of more efficient protection; and above all, the protection of a naval power. Suppose that naval power should be Great Britain. There is Cuba at your very door; and if you spread yourself a along a naked coast, from the Sabine to the Rio Bravo, what will be your relative position

towards Great Britain, with not only Jamaica, but Cuba, and Porto Rico in her hands, and abolition for the motto to her union cross of St. George and St. Andrew? Mr. Chairman, do you think I am treading on fantastic grounds? Let me tell you a piece of history, not far remote. Sir, many years have not passed away since an internal revolution in Spain subjected that country and her king for a short time to the momentary government of the Cortes. That revolution was followed by another, by which, under the auspices of a French army with the Duke a d'Angouleme at their head, Ferdinand the VII was restored to a despotic throne; Cuba had followed the fortunes of the Cortes when they were crowned with victory; and when the counter revolution came, the inhabitants of the island, uncertain what was to be their destination, were for some time in great perplexity what to do for themselves. Two considerable parties arose in the island, one of which was for placing it under the protection of Great Britain, and another was for annexing it to the confederation of these United States. By one of these parties I have reason to believe that overtures were made to the Government of Great Britain. By the other I know that overtures were made to the Government of the United States. And I further know that secret, though irresponsible assurances were communicated to the then President of the United States, as coming from the French Government, that they were secretly informed that the British Government had determined to take possession of Cuba. Whether similar overtures were made to France herself, I do not undertake to say; but that Mr. George Canning, then the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was under no inconsiderable alarm, less under the pupilage of the Duke d'Angouleme, Ferdinand the VII might commit to the commander of a French naval squadron the Moro Castle, is a circumstance also well known to me.

It happened that just about that French squadron of considerable force was fitted out and received orders for the West Indies, without formal communication of the fact to the British Government; and that as soon as it was made known to him, he gave orders to the British Ambassador at Paris to demand, in the most peremptory tone, what was the destination that squadron, and a special and positive disclaimer that it was intended even to visit the Havana; and his was made the occasion of mutual explanations, by which Great Britain, France, and the United States, not by the formal solemnity of a treaty, but by the implied engagement of mutual assurance of intention, gave pledges of honor to each other, that neither of them should in the then condition of the island take it, or the Moro Castle, as its citadel, from the possession of Spain. This engagement was on all ideas faithfully performed; but, without it, no doubts that from that day to this either the three Powers might have taken the island and held it in undisputed possession?

At this time circumstances have changed popular revolutions both in France and Great Britain have perhaps curbed the spirit of conquest in Great Britain, and France may have enough to do to govern her kingdom of Algiers. But Spain is again convulsed with civil war for the succession to her crown; she has irretrievably lost all her colonies on both continents of America. It is impossible that she should hold much longer a shadow of dominion over the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico; nor can those islands, in their present condition, form independent nations, capable of protecting themselves. They must for ages remain at the mercy of Great Britain or of these United States, or of both; Great Britain is even now about to interfere in this war for the Spanish succession. If by the

utter imbecility of the Mexican confederation this revolt of Texas should lead to its separation from that Republic, and its annexation to the United States, I believe it impossible that Great Britain should look on while this operation is forming with indifference. She will see that it must shake her own whole colonial power on this continent, in the Gulf of Mexico, and in the Caribbean seas, like an earthquake; she will see, too, that it endangers her own abolition of slavery in her own colonies. A war for the restoration of slavery where it has been abolished, if successful in Texas, must extend over all Mexico; and the example will threaten her with imminent danger of a war of colors in her own islands. She will take possession of Cuba and of Porto Rico, by cession from Spain or by the batteries from her wooden walls; and if you ask her by what authority she has done it, she will ask you, in return, by what authority you have extended your seacoast from the Sabine to the Rio Bravo. She will ask you a question more perplexing, namely---by what authority you, with freedom, independence, and democracy upon your lips, are waging a war of extermination to forge new manacles and fetters, instead of those which are falling from the hands and feet of man. She will carry emancipation and abolition with her in every fold of her flag; while or stars as they increase in numbers, will overcast with the murky vapors of oppression, and the only portion of your banners visible to the eye, will be the blood-stained stripes of the task master. . . . .